

# State of the Nations

## Kennedy Battens Hatches

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### Washington

The tendency, when storms begin to blow, is to batten down the hatches and turn to those one especially trusts. This in part is President Kennedy's reaction to the reverse in Cuba and the swift deterioration in Laos.

The Central Intelligence Agency produced faulty strategy, if not "intelligence," in the Cuban assault. So now a small trial balloon emanates from the White House suggesting that maybe the President will place his brother, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, in charge of the CIA when its director, Allen W. Dulles, eventually retires, perhaps toward the end of this year.

The President and his brother, Robert, are very close, and the Attorney General was his campaign manager.

The high-level conferences which approved the Cuban strategy embraced mostly those in favor of the assault against Fidel Castro, and failed to include those who might have advised against giving the revolutionaries their go-ahead at this time. So the proposal is to ask Theodore Sorenson, President Kennedy's close friend, adviser,

and associate from way back and now presidential counsel, to take a larger role in foreign policy discussions.

"Ted" Sorenson "is often called the President's 'alter ego,'" thinks as he does, and could well be trusted to remind the President to check with all shades of opinion before embarking on an adventure which gravely commits the nation as did the Cuban assault.

The impression is about, rightly or wrongly, that President Kennedy relied heavily on his White House foreign policy trouble shooters, McGeorge Bundy, the former Harvard dean, and Walt Whitman Rostow, the expert on, among other things, the economic development of backward nations.

This team is close at hand and ready with advice, and the temptation is immediate to blame this brilliant duo for improvising on Cuba and not urging sufficient checking with other counsel available at the State Department and the United Nations.

Whether President Kennedy is or is not stirring any friction by having a foreign policy team operating directly in the White House, separate from the State Department, we do see him moving to widen his consultations. He has even "consulted" with former Presidents Hoover and

Eisenhower, Gen. Douglas MacArthur, UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold, and UN Ambassador Adlai E. Stevenson.

If the United States makes a major move regarding Laos, the President will have touched bases all around beforehand.

There is administration concern at the news dispatches published prior to the Cuban assault, which openly reported some of the covert preparations under way—the training of revolutionaries at a secret Guatemalan base, for instance.

This concern in turn, has prompted President Kennedy to suggest to the American Newspaper Publishers Association meeting in New York some kind of self-discipline by the press in dealing with the paramilitary operations which the United States may undertake when countering the Communists. No joint pledge to eschew all such dispatches may be forthcoming, but the President has at least raised the issue.

What is evident in all of this is that Mr. Kennedy envisions the United States entering into a tougher phase of the cold war. There will be trouble in Viet Nam and Berlin after Laos. There will be more trouble with Cuba.

There will be need at times to fight the Communists with their own weapons of infiltration, guerrilla bands, and arming of defectors.

If the United States needs to gird for storms and show-downs ahead, the White House will want to get its procedures in good order. Whether young Robert Kennedy is the individual to mastermind the whole paramilitary offensive against the Soviets would have to be considered; the conjecture here is that the final choice would be for an experienced military man.

As for purported rivalries between the Bundy-Rostow team and the State Department, the usual answer given by higher-ups these days is that the administration welcomes all the bright teams it can corral, so many are the problems to be tackled. State handles some, and Bundy-Rostow handle others, without clashing.

But it is certain that the President will want to compass the widest counsel in reaching crucial decisions. And this counsel will include, besides the bright young men, the experienced oldsters who understand that the West's victories will not be built in a day, and that even Cuba can wait a bit.